Contents

The letters of the prophet Muhammad ﷺ

(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

To the kings beyond Arabia

Late in the six year A.H., on his return from Hudaibiyah, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, decided to send messages to the kings beyond Arabia calling them to Islam. In order to authenticate the credentials of his envoys, a silver seal was made in which were graven the words: "Muhammad the Messenger of Allâh"

[Sahih Al-Bukhari 2/872,873]

1-A Deputation to Abyssinia (Ethiopia)



Negus, king of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), his name was Ashama bin Al-Abjar, received the Prophet’s message, despatched by Amr bin Omaiyah Ad-Damari, which At-Tabari referred to, either late in the sixth year or early in the seventh year A.H. Deep scrutiny into the letter shows that it was not the one sent after Al-Hudaibiyah event. Wording of the letter rather indicates that it was sent to that king when Ja‘far and his companions emigrated to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) during the Makkan period. One of its sentences read

"I have despatched my cousin, Ja‘far (may Allâh be pleased wth him) with a group of Muslims, to you. Do be generous towards them and give up haughtiness."

Al-Baihaqi, on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, gave the following narration of the Prophet's ﷺ letter sent to Negus:

"This letter is sent from Muhammad, the Prophet to Negus Al-Ashama, the king of Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

Peace be upon him who follows true guidance and believes in Allâh and His Messenger. I bear witness that there is no god but Allâh Alone with no associate, He has taken neither a wife nor a son, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. I call you unto the fold of Islam; if you embrace Islam, you will find safety,

"Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): 'O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allâh, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allâh.' Then, if they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.' " [The Noble Qur'an 3:64]

Should you reject this invitation, then you will be held responsible for all the evils of the Christians of your people."

Dr. Hameedullah (Paris), a reliable verifier, has adduced a version of the above letter disclosed only a short time ago and identical to Ibn Al-Qaiyim's narration. Dr. Hameedullah exerted painstaking effort and used all means of modern technology to verify the text of the letter, which reads as follows:

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. From Muhammad ﷺ the Messenger of Allâh to Negus, king of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Peace be upon him who follows true guidance. Salutations, I entertain Allâh's praise, there is no god but He, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of peace, the Giver of peace, the Guardian of faith, the Preserver of safety. I bear witness that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the spirit of Allâh and His Word which He cast into Mary, the virgin, the good, the pure, so that she conceived Jesus. Allâh created him from His spirit and His breathing as He created Adam by His Hand. I call you to Allâh Alone with no associate and to His obedience and to follow me and to believe in that which came to me, for I am the Messenger of Allâh. I invite you and your men to Allâh, the Glorious, the All-Mighty. I hereby bear witness that I have communicated my message and advice. I invite you to listen and accept my advice. Peace be upon him who follows true guidance."[Za'd Al-Ma'ad 3/60]

When ‘Amr bin Omaiyah Ad-Damari communicated the Apostolic letter to Negus, the latter took the parchment and placed it on his eye, descended to the floor, confessed his faith in Islam and wrote the following reply to the Prophet ﷺ :

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Negus Ashama to Muhammad, the Messenger of Allâh. Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allâh! and mercy and blessing from Allâh beside Whom there is no god. I have received your letter in which you have mentioned about Jesus and by the Lord of heaven and earth, Jesus is not more than what you say. We fully acknowledge that with which you have been sent to us and we have entertained your cousin and his companions. I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allâh, true and confirming (those who have gone before you), I pledge to you through your cousin and surrender myself through him to the Lord of the worlds."[Za'd Al-Ma'ad 3/61]

The Prophet [pbuh] had asked Negus to send Ja‘far and his companions, the emigrants to Abyssinia (Ethiopia), back home. They came back to see the Prophet [pbuh] in Khaibar. Negus later died in Rajab 9 A.H. shortly after Tabuk *Ghazwa*. The Prophet ﷺ announced his death and observed prayer in absentia for him. Another king succeeded Negus to the throne and another letter was sent to him by the Prophet ﷺ but whether or not he embraced Islam is still a question not answered yet. [Sahih Muslim 2/99]

2-Letter to the Vicegerent of Egypt, called Muqawqas



The Prophet ﷺ wrote to Juraij bin Matta [Rahmat-al-lil'alameen 1/178; Dr. Hamidullah said that his name was Binyamin], called Muqawqas, vicegerent of Egypt and Alexandria saying:

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad slave of Allâh and His Messenger to Muqawqas, vicegerent of Egypt.

Peace be upon him who follows true guidance. Thereafter, I invite you to accept Islam. Therefore, if you want security, accept Islam. If you accept Islam, Allâh, the Sublime, shall

reward you doubly. But if you refuse to do so, you will bear the burden of the transgression of all the Copts.

"Say (O Muhammad ﷺ : 'O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allâh, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allâh.' Then, if they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.' " [Al-Qur'an 3:64]

Hatib bin Abi Balta'a, who was chosen to communicate the message, requested an audience with Muqawqas before imparting the contents of the letter. He addressed Egypt's vicegerent saying: "There used to be someone before you who had arrogated the status of the Supreme Lord, so Allâh punished him and made an example of him in the Hereafter, and in this life; therefore, take warning and never set a bad example to others." Muqawqas answered: "We are in no position to relinquish our religion except for a better one." Hatib resumed: "We invite you to embrace Islam, which will suffice you all what you may lose. Our Prophet has called people to profess this Faith, Quraish and the Jews stood against him as bitter enemies, whereas Christians stood closest to his Call. Upon my life, Moses's news about Christ is identical to the latter's good tidings about the advent of Muhammad; likewise, this invitation of ours to you to embrace Islam is similar to your invitation to the people of Torah to accept the New Testament.

Once a Prophet rises in a nation, he is eligible for positive response, hence you are subject to the same Divine Law. Bear in mind that we have not come to dissuade you from religion of Christ but rather bidding you to adhere to its tenets." Muqawqas meditated over the contents of the letter deeply and said: "I have come to the conviction that this Prophet bids nothing abominable; he is neither a straying magician nor a lying soothsayer. He bears the true manifest seeds of Prophethood, and so I will consider the affair deeply." He took the parchment and ordered that it be kept in an ivory casket. He called a scribe to write the following reply in Arabic:

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

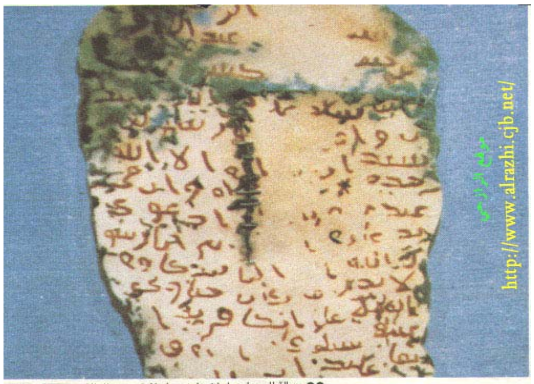
From Muqawqas to Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.

Peace be upon you. I have read your letter and understood its contents, and what you are calling for. I already know that the coming of a Prophet is still due, but I used to believe he would be born in Syria. I am sending you as presents two maids, who come from noble Coptic families; clothing and a steed for riding on. Peace be upon you."

It is noteworthy that Muqawqas did not avail himself of this priceless opportunity and he did not embrace Islam. The presents were accepted; Maria, the first maid, stayed with the Prophet ﷺ,

and gave birth to his son Ibrahîm; the other Sirin, was given to Hassan bin Thabit Al-Ansari.

3-A Letter to Chosroes, Emperor of Persia



●● رسالة الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم الى كسرى ملك الفرس

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allâh to Chosroes, king of Persia.

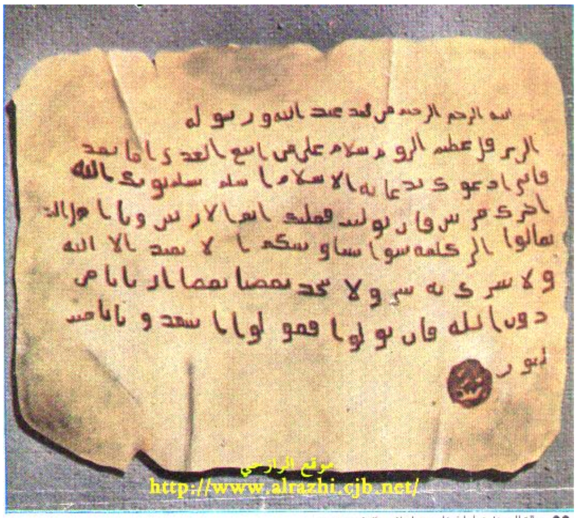
Peace be upon him who follows true guidance, believes in Allâh and His Messenger and testifies that there is no god but Allâh Alone with no associate, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. I invite you to accept the religion of Allâh. I am the Messenger of Allâh sent to all people in order that I may infuse fear of Allâh in every living person, and that the charge may be proved against those who reject the Truth. Accept Islam as

your religion so that you may live in security, otherwise, you will be responsible for all the sins of the Magians."

‘Abdullah bin Hudhafa As-Sahmi was chosen to carry the letter. This envoy carried it to the king of Bahrain but we do not know as yet if the latter despatched to Chosroes by one of his men or chose ‘Abdullah himself.

The proud monarch was enraged by the style of the letter as the name of the Prophet ﷺ had been put above his own name. He tore the letter into shreds and forthwith dictated a command to his viceroy in Yemen to send a couple of troopers to arrest the Prophet and bring him to his presence. The governor, Bazan by name, immediately sent two men to Madinah for the purpose. As soon as the men reached Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ was informed by a Divine Revelation that Pervez, the emperor of Persia, had been murdered by his son. The Prophet ﷺ disclosed to them the news and they were stunned. He added asking them to tell their new monarch that Islam would prevail everywhere and outstrip the sovereignty of Chosroes himself. They hurried back to Bazan and communicated to him what they heard. Meanwhile, Sherweh, the new monarch sent a letter to Bazan confirming the news and bidding him to stop any procedures as regards the Prophet till further notice. Bazan, together with the Persians in Yemen, went into the folds of Islam, and gladly signified his adhesion to the Prophet. [Fath Al-Bari 8/127,128]

4-The Envoy to Caesar, King of Rome



●● رسالة الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم الى هرقل قيصر الروم

Al-Bukhari gave a long narration of the contents of the letter sent by the Prophet ﷺ to Hercules, king of the Byzantines:

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad, the slave of Allâh and His Messenger to Hercules, king of the Byzantines.

Blessed are those who follow true guidance. I invite you to embrace Islam so that you may live in security. If you come

within the fold of Islam, Allâh will give you double reward, but in case you turn your back upon it, then the burden of the sins of all your people shall fall on your shoulders.

"Say (O Muhammad [pbuh]): 'O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allâh, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allâh.' Then, if they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.' " [The Noble Qur'an 3:64]

[Sahih Al-Bukhari 1/4,5]

The Muslim envoy, Dihyah bin Khalifah Al-Kalbi, was ordered to hand the letter over to king of Busra, who would in turn, send it to Caesar.

Incidentally, Abu Sufyan bin Harb, who by that time had not embraced Islam, was summoned to the court and Hercules asked him many questions about Muhammad ﷺ and the religion which he preached. The testimony which this avowed enemy of the Prophet gave regarding the personal excellence of the Prophet's character and the good that Islam was doing the human race, left Hercules wonder-struck.

Al-Bukhâri, on the authority of Ibn Abbas, narrated that Hercules sent for Abu Sufyan and his companions, who happened to be

trading in Ash-Sham, Jerusalem. That was during the truce that had been concluded between the polytheists of Quraish and the Messenger of Allâh [pbuh].

Hercules, seated amongst his chiefs of staff, asked, "Who amongst you is the nearest relative to the man who claims to be a Prophet?" "I (Abu Sufyan) replied: ‘I am the nearest relative to him from amongst the group.’ So they made me sit in front of him and made my companions sit behind me. Then he called upon his translator and said (to him). ‘Tell them (i.e. Abu Sufyan’s companions) that I am going to ask him (i.e. Abu Sufyan) regarding that men who claims to be a Prophet. So if he tells a lie, they should contradict him (instantly)’. By Allâh had I not been afraid that my companions would consider me a liar, I would have told lies", Abu Sufyan later said.

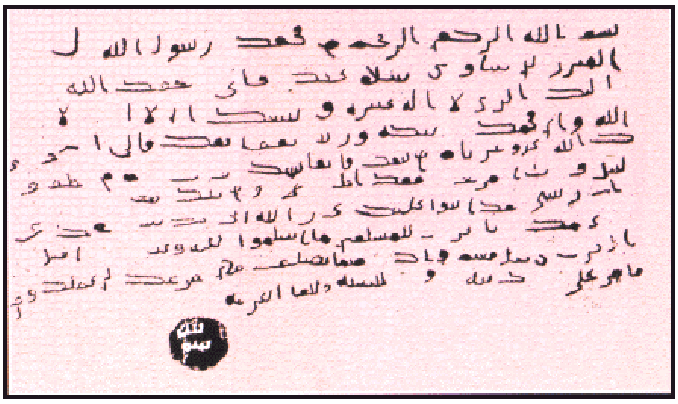
Abu Sufyan’s testimony went as follows: "Muhammad descends from a noble family. No one of his family happened to assume kingship. His followers are those deemed weak with numbers ever growing. He neither tells lies nor betrays others, we fight him and he fights us but with alternate victory. He bids people to worship Allâh Alone with no associate, and abandon our fathers’ beliefs. He orders us to observe prayer, honesty, abstinence and maintain strong family ties."

"Hercules, on hearing this testimony, turned to his translator bidding him to communicate to us his following impression which reveals full conviction in the truthfulness of Muhammad’s Prophethood: ‘I fully realize that Prophets come from noble families; he does not affect any previous example of Prophethood.

Since none of his ancestors was a monarch, we cannot then allege that he is a man trying to reclaim his father's monarchy. So long as he does not tell lies to people, he is for the more reason, immune to telling lies as regards Allâh. Concerning his followers being those deemed weak with numbers ever growing, it is something that goes in agreement with questions of Faith until this latter assumes its full dimensions geographically and demographically. I have understood that no instance of apostasy has as yet appeared among his followers, and this points to the bliss of Faith that finds its abode in the human heart. Betrayal, as I see, is alien to him because real Prophets hold betrayal in abhorrence. Bidding worship of Allâh with no associates, observance of prayer, honesty and abstinence and prohibition of paganism are traits bound to subject to him all my possessions. I have already known that a Prophet must arise but it has never occurred to me that he will be an Arab from among you. If I was sure I would be faithful to him, I might hope to meet him, and if I were with him, I would wash his feet.'

Hercules then requested that the Prophet's letter be read. The observations of the emperor and finally the definite and clear-cut exposition of the Islamic message could not but create a tense atmosphere amongst the clergy present at the court. We were ordered to go out." Abu Sufyan said, "While coming out, I said to my companions, 'The matter of Ibn Abi Kabshah (i.e. Muhammad ﷺ) has become so prominent that even the king of Banu Al-Asfar (i.e. the Romans) is afraid of him.' So I continued to believe that Allâh's Messenger ﷺ would be victorious, till Allâh made me embrace Islam." The king did not embrace Islam — for it was differently ordained. However, the Muslim envoy was returned to Madinah with the felicitations of the emperor.

5-A Letter to Mundhir bin Sawa, Governor of Bahrain



The Prophet ﷺ, despatched ‘Al-‘Ala’ bin Al-Hadrami to the governor of Bahrain, carrying a letter inviting him to embrace Islam. In reply, Al-Mundhir bin Sawa wrote the following letter:

"Allâh’s Messenger ﷺ ! I received your injunctions. Prior to this, I read your letter, which you wrote to the people of Bahrain extending to them an invitation to Islam. Islam appealed to some of them and they entered the fold of Islam, while others did not find it appealing. In my country, there live Magians and Jews, and therefore you may inform me of the treatment to be extended to them."

The Prophet ﷺ wrote the following letter in reply to his:

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad, Messenger of Allâh to Mundhir bin Sawa.

Peace be on you! I praise Allâh with no associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

Thereafter, I remind you of Allâh, the Mighty, the Glorious. Whoever accepts admonition, does it for his own good. Whoever follows my messengers and acts in accordance with their guidance, he, in fact, accepts my advice.

My messengers have highly praised your behaviour. You shall continue in your present office. Give the new Muslims full chance to preach their religion. I accept your recommendation regarding the people of Bahrain, and I pardon the offences of the offenders; therefore, you may also forgive them.

Of the people of Bahrain whoever wants to go on in their Jewish or Magian faith, should be made to pay *Jizya* (poll-tax)." **[Za'd Al-Ma'ad 3/61,62]**

6-A Letter to Haudha bin ‘Ali, Governor of Yamama

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad, Messenger of Allâh to Haudha bin ‘Ali.

Peace be upon him who follows true guidance. Be informed that my religion shall prevail everywhere. You should accept Islam, and whatever under your command shall remain yours."

The envoy chosen was Sulait bin ‘Amr Al-‘Amiri, who after communicating his message, carried back the following reply to the Prophet ﷺ, "The Faith, to which you invite me, is very good. I am a famous orator and poet, the Arabs highly respect me and I am of account among them. If you include me in your government, I am prepared to follow you."

The governor then bestowed a reward on Sulait and presented him with clothes made of Hajr fabric. Of course, he put all those presents in the trust of the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ did not accept Haudha's demand. He usually turned down such peremptory tone, and would say that the whole matter was in the Hand of Allâh, Who gave His land to whoever He desired. Gabriel later came with the Revelation that Haudha had died. The Prophet ﷺ , in the context of his comment on this news, said: "Yamama is bound to give rise to a liar who will arrogate Prophethood to himself but he will subsequently be killed." In reply to a question relating to the identity of the killer, the Prophet said "It is one of you, followers of Islam."[Za'd Al-Ma'ad 3/63]

7-A Letter to Harith bin Abi Shamir Al-Ghassani, King of Damascus

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad, Messenger of Allâh to Al-Harith bin Abi Shamir.

Peace be upon him who follows true guidance, believes in it and regards it as true. I invite you to believe in Allâh Alone with no associate, thenceafter your kingdom will remain yours."

Shuja‘ bin Wahab had the honour of taking the letter to Harith, who upon hearing the letter read in his audience, was madly infuriated and uttered: "Who dares to disposs me of my country, I'll fight him (the Prophet)," and arrogantly rejected the Prophet's invitation to the fold of Islam. [Za'd Al-Ma'ad 3/62; Muhadarat Tareekh Al-Umam Al-Islamiyah 1/146]

8-A Letter to the King of ‘Oman, Jaifer, and his Brother ‘Abd Al-Jalandi

"In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

From Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah to Jaifer and ‘Abd Al-Jalandi.

Peace be upon him who follows true guidance; thereafter I invite both of you to the Call of Islam. Embrace Islam. Allâh has sent me as a Prophet to all His creatures in order that I may instil fear of Allâh in the hearts of His disobedient creatures so that there may be left no excuse for those who deny Allâh. If you two accept Islam, you will remain in command of your country; but if you refuse my Call, you’ve got to remember that all your possessions are perishable. My horsemen will appropriate your land, and my Prophethood will assume preponderance over your kingship."

‘Amr bin Al-’As, who was chosen to carry the letter, narrated the following story that happened before he was admitted into the audience of Jaifer.

"When I arrived in ‘Oman I contacted ‘Abd, who was known to be more mild-tempered than his brother:

‘Amr: I am the messenger of Allâh’s Prophet coming to see both, you and your brother.

‘Abd: You have to see my brother and read to him the letter you are carrying. He is my senior in both age and kingship. Incidentally, what is the purport of your mission?

‘Amr: The Prophet calls upon you to believe in Allâh Alone with no associate, discard any other deities and testify to the slavehood and Messengership of Muhammad.

‘Abd: O ‘Amr! You come from a noble family, but first of all, tell me what was your father’s attitude concerning this Faith? You know, we used to follow his steps.

‘Amr: Death overtook him before believing in Muhammad’s mission; I wish now he had embraced Islam and been truthful to it before his death. I myself had adopted the same attitude until Allâh guided me towards Islam.

‘Abd: When did you embrace Islam?

‘Amr: When I was at Negus’s court. By the way, the latter did also enter into the fold of Islam.

‘Abd: What was his people’s reaction?

‘Amr: They approved of him and followed his steps.

‘Abd: The bishops and monks?

‘Amr: They did the same.

‘Abd: Beware ‘Amr of lying for this soon betrays man.

‘Amr: I never tell lies; moreover, our religion never allows it.

‘Abd: Has Hercules been informed of the Islamization of Negus?

‘Amr: Yes, of course.

‘Abd: How did you happen to know that?

‘Amr: Negus used to pay land tax to Hercules, but when the former embraced Islam, he swore he would discontinue that tax. When this news reached Hercules, his courtiers urged him to take action against Negus but he refused and added that he himself would do the same if he were not sparing of his kingship.

‘Abd: What does your Prophet exhort you to do?

‘Amr: He exhorts us to obey Allâh, the All-Mighty, the All-Glorious, be pious and maintain good ties with family kin; he forbids disobedience, aggression, adultery, wine, idolatry and devotion to the cross.

‘Abd: Fair words and fair beliefs are those you are calling for. I wish my brother would follow me to believe in Muhammad ﷺ and profess his religion, but my brother is too sparing of his kingship to become a subordinate.

‘Amr: Should your brother surrender himself to Islam, the Prophet would give him authority over his people and take alms tax from the wealthy people to be given to the needy.

‘Abd: That is fair behaviour. But what is this alms tax you have mentioned?

‘Amr: It is a Divine injunction that alms tax be taken from the

well-to-do people who have surplus wealth and be distributed to the poor.

‘Abd: I doubt if this can work among our people.

‘Amr stayed for some days to be admitted into Jaifer’s court until he was finally granted this permit. "He asked me to hand him the letter to read it. After that he asked me how Quraish reacted and I answered that they had followed him, some out of their own freewill and others overpowered by military fighting. Now, people have chosen Islam in preference to other creeds, and have realized through their mental insight that they had been straying in darkness. None, except you, is now out of the domain of Islam, so I advise you to embrace Islam so that you can provide security to yourself and your country."

Here, he asked me to call on him the following day. The following day he showed some reluctance in receiving me but his brother, ‘Abd, interceded and I was given the chance to see him again but this time to address me in a threatening arrogant tone. However, after a private talk with his brother and reconsidering the whole situation, both brothers embraced Islam and proved to be true to Islam that had begun to make its way into this new area.

The context of this story reveals that this letter was sent at a much later date than the others, most likely after the conquest of Makkah.

Through these letters, the Prophet managed to communicate his Message to most monarchs at that time; some believed, while others remained obdurate and persisted in their disbelief. However, the idea of embracing Islam, and the advent of a new Prophet preoccupied all of them.